

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): An image forming apparatus for forming a toner image on a sheet-like recording medium, said image forming apparatus comprising:

a plurality of image carriers arranged side by side;

charging means, exposing means and developing means arranged around each of said plurality of image carriers for respectively charging an associated one of said plurality of image carriers, forming a latent image on said associated image carrier and developing said latent image with toner to thereby produce a corresponding toner image; and

image transferring means for sequentially transferring toner images formed on said plurality of image carriers to the recording medium one above the other;

wherein said image transferring means comprises an image transfer belt and a plurality of bias applying members for applying image transfer biases to image transfer nips formed between said plurality of bias applying members and said plurality of image carriers, which face each other with the intermediary of said image transfer belt,

said plurality of ~~image transferring~~ bias applying members each has an axis positioned downstream, in a direction of movement of said image transfer belt, of a virtual vertical line extending from an axis of an associated one of said plurality of image carriers downward, and

at least two of said plurality of bias applying members are provided with respective belt holding members positioned downstream of said two bias applying members in the direction of movement of said image transfer belt,

each said belt holding member being supported by a resilient member.

Claim 2 (Currently Amended): The apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a plurality of pressing means for respectively pressing said plurality of bias

applying ~~means~~ members against said plurality of image carriers, wherein a position of each belt holding member and a pressure of each bias applying ~~means~~ member are selected such that a width over which said image transfer belt is caused to wrap around each image carrier by said bias applying member associated with said image carrier is greater when said belt holding member is mounted than when said belt holding member is dismounted.

Claim 3 (Currently Amended): The apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a plurality of pressing means for respectively pressing said plurality of bias applying ~~means~~ members against said plurality of image carriers, wherein a distance from an axis of each image carrier to each bias applying member is greater when said belt holding member is dismounted than when said belt holding member is mounted.

Claim 4 (Original): The apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein each bias applying member contacts said image transfer belt within a width over which said image transfer belt wraps around said image carrier.

Claim 5 (Currently Amended): The apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein each bias applying ~~means~~ member comprises an image transfer roller.

Claim 6 (Canceled).

Claim 7 (Currently Amended): A method of forming a toner ~~In an~~ image on a sheet-
like recording medium, including:

forming an image on a first image carrier;

~~forming apparatus for transferring an image formed on one image carrier on a belt-like image passing a belt-like image~~ transfer body ~~passed~~ over a plurality of support members; [[by]]

applying an image transfer bias to a bias applying member that faces said image carrier with the intermediary of said image transfer ~~body~~, and body;

transferring an image formed on another image carrier located downstream of said ~~one first~~ image carrier in a direction of movement of said image transfer body ~~above said image with a same configuration~~[[.,]];

shifting an axis of said bias applying member ~~is shifted~~ from a virtual vertical line extending from an axis of said image carrier downward to a downstream side in a direction of movement of said image transfer ~~body~~, and body;

positioning an image transfer body holding member ~~is positioned~~ downstream of said bias applying ~~means~~ member for pressing said image transfer body toward said image carrier to thereby cause said image transfer body to wrap around said image carrier over a preselected range downstream of a center of an image transfer nip[[.,]]; and

biasing said image transfer body holding member toward said image carrier by an elastic member.

Claim 8 (Currently Amended): The ~~apparatus~~ method as claimed in claim 7, ~~wherein~~ further including:

wrapping a width over which said image transfer body ~~wraps~~ around said image carrier at a position upstream of the image transfer nip in the direction of movement of said image transfer body [[is]] at a width greater than when said bias applying member is positioned on the vertical line.

Claim 9 (Currently Amended): The ~~apparatus~~ method as claimed in claim 7, further including:

~~comprising pressing means for~~ pressing said bias applying member, wherein a substantially entire amount of wrapping of said image transfer body around said image carrier is established by a pressure of said image transfer body holding member to thereby allow said bias applying ~~means~~ member to exert a minimum necessary pressure on said image carrier.

Claim 10 (Canceled).

Claim 11 (Canceled).

Claim 12 (Currently Amended): The ~~apparatus~~ method as claimed in claim ~~[[11]]~~ 7, ~~wherein~~ further including:

conveying said image transfer body ~~conveys~~ a sheet-like recording medium via said image transfer body to thereby allow the images to be transferred to said recording medium, and a bias of said elastic member is selected such that said image transfer body holding member moves away from said image carrier in accordance with a thickness of said recording medium.

Claim 13 (Currently Amended): The ~~apparatus~~ method as claimed in claim 7, ~~wherein~~ further including:

configuring said image transfer body holding member ~~said image transfer body holding member is biased toward said image carrier and configured~~ to be unmovable toward said image carrier in a direction of thickness of said image transfer body, but movable in an opposite direction.

Claim 14 (Currently Amended): The ~~apparatus~~ method as claimed in claim 13,
~~wherein~~ further including:

biasing said image transfer body holding member ~~comprises~~ via a roller rotatably supported by a bearing, which is biased by said elastic member and fixed in position at a preselected position by a stop.

Claim 15 (Currently Amended): The ~~apparatus~~ method as claimed in claim 13,
~~wherein~~ further including:

conveying ~~said image transfer body conveys~~ a sheet-like recording medium via said image transfer body to thereby allow the images to be transferred to said recording medium[[],]; and

biasing ~~a bias of said elastic member is selected such that~~ said image transfer body holding member such that said image transfer body holding member moves away from said image carrier in accordance with a thickness of said recording medium.

Claim 16 (Canceled).

Claim 17 (Currently Amended): The ~~apparatus~~ method as claimed in claim 7,
wherein said image transfer body holding member is formed of a material that substantially does not electrically operate in relation to an image transfer body applied to said bias applying member.

Claim 18 (Currently Amended): The ~~apparatus~~ method as claimed in claim 17, wherein said image transfer body holding member is provided with a medium-resistance layer on at least a surface thereof.

Claim 19 (Currently Amended): ~~In an~~ An image transferring unit comprising a belt-like image transfer body passed over a plurality of support members and having a surface movable via a plurality of image carriers, which are mounted on a body of an image forming apparatus side by side, and a plurality of bias applying members respectively facing said plurality of image carriers with the intermediary of said image transfer body and applied with biases for transferring images formed on said plurality of image carriers, an axis of each bias applying member is shifted from a virtual vertical line extending from an axis of an associated image carrier downward to a downstream side in a direction of movement of said image transfer body, and an image transfer body holding member is positioned downstream of said bias applying member for pressing said image transfer body toward said image carrier to thereby cause said image transfer body to wrap around said image carrier over a preselected range downstream of a center of an image transfer nip, wherein each image transfer body holding member is supported by a resilient member.

Claim 20 (Currently Amended): The ~~apparatus~~ unit as claimed in claim 19, wherein a width over which said image transfer body wraps around said image carrier at a position upstream of the image transfer nip in the direction of movement of said image transfer body is greater than when said bias applying member is positioned on the vertical line.

Claim 21 (Currently Amended): The ~~apparatus~~ unit as claimed in claim 19, further comprising pressing means for pressing said bias applying member, wherein a substantially entire amount of wrapping of said image transfer body around said image carrier is established by a pressure of said image transfer body holding member to thereby cause said bias applying ~~means~~ members to exert a minimum necessary pressure on said image carrier.